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Identical letters dated 20 March 2012 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey the position of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2012/124).

The Syrian Arab Republic wishes to reaffirm that it respects Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence. Syria further reaffirms its commitment to providing all possible support and assistance to consolidate the authority and sovereignty of the Lebanese Government over all Lebanese territory.

With regard to the contents of paragraphs 5, 6, 50, 77 and 79, it is unacceptable to continue introducing Syria or its internal situation into the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), which was adopted with regard to Israeli aggression against Lebanon. Such matters are not within the mandate of the Secretary-General's representative.

Experts, officials and observers are unanimous that weapons are being smuggled into Syrian territory from bordering States, including Lebanon. The competent authorities in Syria have repeatedly announced confiscations of weapons, explosives and explosive devices smuggled from Lebanon to Syria by certain Lebanese political forces linked to terrorist groups funded and armed from abroad. Those groups fabricate shootings that cost the lives of numerous civilians and members of the Army and security forces. The Syrian Government believes that the issue of the so-called Syrian refugees is, to a large extent, a fabricated one. It hopes that they will return to their homeland and that their presence will not be exploited for political purposes. The notable improvement in the security situation has led sizeable groups to return to their country and resume their work, which the terrorist groups had prevented them from doing. There are, however, terrorist groups that flee to neighbouring States claiming to be innocent refugees who have been attacked by the security forces. Certain international non-governmental organizations collaborate with them in bad faith, offering services that allow them to continue their terrorist activities and maintain contact with their proxies in Syria. Syria has long reiterated its position that Syrian citizens, who have suffered at the hands of armed terrorist groups, should be allowed to return safely to their homes without being harassed by the armed groups, the States that fund and arm terrorists, or the media propagandists. However, certain organizations and individuals in Lebanon

and elsewhere want to exploit the humanitarian dimension for political purposes with the aim of damaging and destabilizing Syria. We therefore reiterate that the attempt to introduce Syria's name into the internal Lebanese situation is part of the campaign against Syria and violates the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The infiltration of French, American and British journalists over the border from Lebanon into Syria must be condemned, as it violates the sovereignty of Lebanon and Syria alike.

With regard to paragraphs 46, 48 and 49 concerning the arms embargo and border control, the arms are in fact being smuggled from Lebanon into Syria. Everyone is aware that certain parties in Lebanon are seeking to destabilize Syria by providing armed terrorist groups in Syria with weapons and funds for the purpose of undermining Syria. The Lebanese and Syrian authorities have intercepted many of these smuggling operations and statements have been made officially and in the media in both Syria and Lebanon. Intensive efforts are under way to end the smuggling of weapons into Syria. Syria hopes that the authors of the report will reflect that information, as set out in statements by Lebanese officials, and that they will not ignore us as has been customary in previous reports.

Syria reiterates that it does not accept the references made in paragraphs 53, 54 and 55 of the report to the delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border, which is a bilateral matter. It reaffirms that the real obstacle to the final delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border, and to its effective administration, is Israel's continued aggression and its occupation of the Syrian Golan and the Shab'a Farms. The occupation makes it impossible to delineate the border in those areas. The international community must take the steps required to compel Israel to withdraw from the Lebanese and Syrian territory which it occupies, in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the principle of land for peace, in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

According to paragraph 54, "the complex security situation along the Syrian-Lebanese border in the current circumstances further underlines the importance of delineating and demarcating the border". That statement is unacceptable, as it attempts to distract the attention of the Council from the topic of the resolution, namely the Israeli aggression against Lebanon.

With regard to paragraphs 56 and 80, the main party violating resolution 1701 (2006) is Israel. Whoever claims to want Lebanon's stability and territorial integrity must also want its security and independence. Consequently, it is essential to put real pressure on Israel to withdraw from the remaining occupied Lebanese territory and take deterrent measures to prevent and put an end to Israeli violations.

As regards what paragraphs 41 and 54 have to say about so-called armed Palestinian groups, the Palestinian presence in Lebanon is regulated by Lebanese-Palestinian agreements, which have no connection with Syria. Regarding the report's reference to Palestinian positions straddling the Syrian-Lebanese border, we affirm once again that all of those positions lie inside Lebanese territory. Syria therefore will not involve itself with the matter. The principal reason for the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and neighbouring States, including Syria, is Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territory and its refusal to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy, especially Security Council resolutions 242

(1967) and 338 (1973) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which guarantee the refugees' right of return to the land from which they were expelled.

The authors of the report should respect the independence and sovereignty of Lebanon and should not interfere in its internal affairs on any pretext whatsoever. Nor should they continue to overlook the fact that, in order to ensure Lebanon's security and stability, it is vital to deter Israel's continual violations and end its occupation of Lebanese territory.

We reaffirm that, if the international community wishes to play a positive role in Lebanon, it must act swiftly to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory. In so doing, it would bolster Lebanon's security and independence and have a positive impact on Syria and the entire region. Lastly, the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its support for the stability and security of Lebanon, for its efforts to liberate the parts of its territory occupied by Israel, and for its territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.

I should like this letter to be issued as a document of the Security Council before the date on which the Security Council discusses the report.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative